



# PRISON VOICE

May 2022

Vol. XIX

Issue 05

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



*Sainthood, the Greatest Calling*



**Archbishop of Delhi Washing the Feet of Tihar Prisoners**



**Ernakulam Zonal Meeting at Santhinivas, Pathadipalam**



**Anniversary of Snehashramam, Trivandrum**



**Easter Celebration at Bangalore Central Prison**



**Karnataka State PMI Executive Committee Meeting, Shimoga**



**Maundy Thursday Celebration Aluva Prison**



**Maundy Thursday Celebration Ernakulam Subjail**



**Maundy Thursday Celebration Jail Number 16, Tihar**

# Contents



## PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY

Be Perfect  
Because Your  
Heavenly Father  
Is Perfect



THE ADVENTURE OF ORDINARY LIFE • MEDITATIONS WITH FR. JIM ACHACOSO

Editor's View.....	04
National Coordinator's Desk.....	05
St Devasahayam Pillai .....	08
St Titus Brandsma .....	09
St Peter Nolasco .....	13
Feet Washing in Tihar Jail.....	14
In Remembrance of Vanitha Shetty .....	16
Karnataka State Executive Body Meeting .....	17
Every Saint has a Past .....	19
Prison Ministry India .....	20
Vanitha Shetty: In Memoriam .....	22
Transformed .....	23
Visit to Three Central Prisons.....	24
Gender Equality Today .....	25
Tihar Maundy Thursday .....	26
PMI Training Program 2022 .....	27
Charles De Foucauld.....	30

### Are You Willing?

"Help a Prisoner's Child  
Prevent a Potential  
Criminal"

80% of the children of  
prisoners are potential  
criminals unless somebody  
takes care of them.

Prison Ministry India has  
begun a scheme to  
educate 1000  
children of prisoners:  
Kindly contribute

Rs. 5,000/- for the education  
of a child.

#### BANK DETAILS:

A/c Name : Prison Ministry India  
Bank : South Indian Bank  
Branch : Sarjapur Road  
A/C No : 0416053000001419  
IFSC Code : SIBL0000518

#### Patron

Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva

#### Managing Editor

Rev Dr Francis Kodyian MCBS

#### Chief Editor

Sr Amala DC

#### Circulation Managers

Fr Benny Thomas Pachanal CRSP  
Fr Antony O de M

#### Editorial Board

Fr Shaji Stephen O de M  
Fr Wilfred Fernandes  
Sr Jobina UFS  
Fr George Peter MST

#### Magazine Staff

Sr Basil SCS  
Sr Joanna SCS

#### Graphics and Layout

Dinto Tom K T

#### Printing

Sevasadan Printing Press  
Koramangala, Bengaluru

#### Prison Ministry India

52, Thomas Layout  
Sarjapur Road  
Carmelaram  
Bangalore-560 035  
Karnataka, India

☎ 9447710488  
9486604887

#### Email

prisonvoice123@gmail.com  
nationalpmi2015@gmail.com

#### Website

www.prisonministryindia.org

## MAY - A MONTH TO HONOUR MOTHER MARY

### Queenship of Mary

In the month of May, the most affectionate and fervent acts of homage in prayers and devotions are raised from the hearts of Christians to Mary in churches and homes. It is also the month in which the most generous and abundant gifts of the Divine Mercy descend upon us from the Lord's throne. This is the month in which the Church honours our Blessed Mother with special devotions. The primary act of devotion is the recitation of the Rosary, which has been described as "the compendium of the entire Gospel" by Pope Pius XII. In 1945, Pope Pius XII confirmed May as the Marian month after establishing the feast of the Queenship of Mary on 31st May. After the Second Vatican Council, this feast was moved to August 22, while May 31st became the feast of the Visitation of Mary. The month of May is one that is rich in tradition and a beautiful time of the year to honour our heavenly mother. We believe that Mary is the greatest Saint, and we have always prayed for her intercession through the Hail Mary asking her to "pray for us now and at the hour of our death." Mary's role is to lead us to her Son and to deepen our devotion to Jesus as the Christ, our Saviour. The Catholic Church has four basic dogmas about Mary: First, she is the Mother of God. Second, Mary remained a virgin all her life. Third, Mary was conceived without original sin. Fourth, Mary was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. There are numerous devotions to the Blessed Virgin, but the most significant among them is the Rosary, a devotion that has been around since the 12th century. So let us continue



**Sr Amala DC**  
Chief Editor

this devotion, by honouring and reciting the Rosary in a devout and meaningful manner, even more specially by reciting the Rosary for our brethren behind the bars, for their families and children.

### Sainthood, the Greatest Calling

On 15th May 2022 Pope Francis is going to canonize ten more saints. It's a moment of great joy for the Church to have ten more noble men and women added to the galaxy of saints who followed the values of the Gospel intensely and were thus more closely united with Jesus. They are Blessed Charles de Foucauld, Blessed Devasahayam Pillai (Lazarus), Blessed Cesar de Bus, Blessed Luigi Maria Palazzolo, Blessed Giustino Maria Russolillo, Blessed Maria Francesca di Gesu, Blessed Maria Domenica Mantovani, Blessed Father Titus Brandsma, Blessed Sister Maria Rivier and Blessed Sister Maria of Jesus. It is a matter of pride for us to have among them an Indian martyr Devasahayam Pillai from the Catholic diocese of Kottar, Kanyakumary in Tamil Nadu. Devasahayam Pillai, a Hindu who had converted to Christianity in the 18th Century, will become the first Indian layman to be conferred sainthood. Among these Blesseds, Charles de Foucauld, Devasahayam Pillai, and Father Titus Brandsma are very closely associated with prison ministry. Through their powerful intercession, let us pray for our Prison Ministry, which is dedicated to the holistic development of the incarcerated.



■■■■■■■■■■

# **CHARLES DE FOUCAULD: LIFE AND MISSION**

■■■■■



**Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS**  
National Coordinator & Secretary to CBCI  
for Prison Ministry India

## **Introduction**

Charles de Foucauld, a grain of wheat (Jn 12,24), fell in the Saharan desert and died on first December 1916. Though it seemed that his life had been a total failure ending in absolute desperation without a single soul to follow him, today 106 years after his martyrdom, the world is convinced that his life of total simplicity and poverty in the Saharan desert had great meaning before God and exercised an enormous power to influence innumerable men and women into the twenty first century. The grain of wheat which fell in the soil of the Tamanrasset did not merely die but sprouted again with great vigour to grow and spread its branches all over the world bringing thirty-, sixty- and hundred-fold fruits. The body which was broken by being brutally assassinated in the hermitage of Tamanrasset has risen with great luminosity to be placed on the top of the mountain to spread divine light to people in darkness. The blood that was shed by bullets and washed down into the soil of Tamanrasset became a stream of living water, flowing to all corners of the world. This article investigates briefly the life and mission of Charles de Foucauld who will be canonized on 15 May 2022 by Holy Father Pope Francis.

## **Childhood**

Charles Eugène de Foucauld was born on 15 September 1858 at Strasbourg in the province of Alsace, France, as the eldest son of François Edouard and Elizabeth de Morlet. Charles became an orphan at the age of six. Marie Moitessier, Charles' cousin, later married to Vicomte Olivier de Bondy, was the only relative ever to properly understand his emotional and spiritual needs. For Charles, she was like his mother and he frequently called her *mother*. In October 1874 Charles became a boarder at St. Genevieve's in Paris, a Jesuit institute for preparing for the entrance examination to Saint-Cyr, the French Military Academy. Immediately after his graduation, Charles received his first commission in October 1879 as a sub-lieutenant in the French army with an appointment at Pont-à-Mousson.

## **Moroccan Exploration**

Charles did a scientific geographical study of the unexplored and unknown Kingdom of Morocco. The journey was difficult and dangerous. They were robbed several times.



## CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

They risked death at the hands of robbers and also at the hands of the authorities who might have had them executed as spies. After accomplishing his mission in 1885 his findings were published with the title *The Reconnaissance of Morocco*. This work won world-wide acclaim in scientific circles and won a gold medal from the Paris Geographical Society. The Moroccan exploration not only made him more famous and more mature but also led him to explore his own inner self. Above all, it paved the way for returning to the Source as well as undertaking the great missions and projects of God.

### Trappist

As soon as Charles believed that God is, he understood that he could not do otherwise than to totally live for Him. This meant that his religious vocation was born at the same moment as the rebirth of his faith. On 26 June 1890 he joined the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in Akbès, Syria. They put in long, hard days at work and ate very little and maintained the continual Trappist silence. On 2 February 1892, he made his temporary profession of vows and began the theology course in August.

### Nazareth Vocation

The long-cherished dream of Charles de Foucauld to live the Nazareth life was realised in March 1897. Abbé Huvelin suggested Charles to attach himself as a porter to some religious house in Nazareth, possibly a Franciscan Monastery, where he could live at

the door, alone, independent and not subject to the Franciscan Rule. It was an experiment of hermitage life. He lived in a tool shed and christened it *Hermitage of Our Lady of Perpetual Help*. He swept, went on errands, gardened, painted pictures, drew sketches, served at Holy Mass and benediction, acted as sacristan and spent the remaining time in personal prayer, meditation and spiritual reading. Charles worked during the day at Nazareth. In the morning and the evening and a part of the night he either prayed or read. He enjoyed meditating on the gospels, reading theological books. In 1898, Charles was sent to the Poor Clare Convent in Jerusalem. There he met Mother Elizabeth who was to change the whole *weltanschauung* of Charles de Foucauld. Inspired by Mother Elisabeth, convinced by his own meditation and in consultation and discernment with Abbé Huvelin, Charles decided to be a priest. On 16 August 1900, Charles went back to France to continue his priestly studies and was ordained on 9 June 1901 in Viviers, France.

### Saharan Missionary

Obtaining permission from the Prefect Apostolic of the French Sahara Charles settled in the Algerian Sahara, at Beni-Abbès, the Algerian oasis closest to Morocco. There Charles constructed a small hermitage and named it the *Hermitage of the Sacred Heart*. He wanted to be a brother to everyone, totally available to everybody, and devoted himself fully out of universal love to the poor of the Sahara. People soon came to call the little hermitage «the fraternity» and slowly the fraternity grew into a hive of activity. Charles

was a great missionary among the Moslems; not an ordinary missionary but a monk missionary. Charles continued to develop his missionary style and evangelization methods which today have perennial values. Out of his prolonged experience, he developed seven great means of converting the unbelievers. In short, they are: 1) offering the Holy Sacrifice, 2) putting ourselves in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, 3) goodness, 4) prayer, 5) penance, 6) good example, and 7) personal holiness.

### Religious Foundations

Charles had been dreaming of establishing a religious congregation. His vision was very simple, that is, a community, numerically small, resembling the simple communities of the early Church; a few souls united to lead the life of Nazareth like the Holy Family, living by their own labour and practicing the Nazarene virtues. A little family, a little monastic home, quite small and simple which would live the contemplation, work, hospitality, charity, and simplicity of the early Christians. In 1899, he modified the Constitution and the Rule of the *Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart* with the help of the Rule of St. Augustine. In 1902, he prepared the Constitution and Regulation of the *Little Sisters of Sacred Heart of Jesus*. In 1909 he formulated the statutes and directory for the *Union of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* an organization meant for the lay people. The initial ideas for the *Priests' Fraternity* developed in the second period (1943-1992).

### Conclusion

Charles de Foucauld became an orphan at the age of six. During his school days he lost his faith. Immediately after his graduation from the military academy, he became a sub-lieutenant in the French army. The adventurous and scientific Moroccan exploration and the glorious publication of the book *Reconnaissance au Maroc* revealed not only his greatness to the world but also the greatness and dignity of his soul and his lost Catholic faith to himself. When the «prodigal son» returned, his family members welcomed him unconditionally which accelerated his return to God. He joined the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of the Snows in France and in search of greater poverty went to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Syria. At the Poor Clare's convent, Nazareth, he worked as a servant and deepened his Nazareth vocation. In 1901, he became a priest and went to the Algerian Sahara as a missionary and dedicated his whole life for the integral development of the Tuaregs until his assassination on first December 1916.

“It is not necessary to teach others, to cure them or to improve them; it is only necessary to live among them, sharing the human condition and being present to them in love.”

- Charles de Foucauld

# **ST DEVASAHAYAM PILLAI - A SAINT FROM PRISON**

---

---



**Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**

## **Introduction**

“O Jesus, do not abandon me. Into your hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit. O Blessed Mother Mary, help me”, prayed St Devasahayam Pillai, the first Indian layman to be conferred with sainthood. St Devasahayam Pillai (23 April 1712 – 14 January 1752) was born at Palliyadi, Nattalam, Kanyakumari District, Kingdom of Travancore. A Hindu from Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu, who converted to Christianity in the 18th century, will become the **first Indian layman saint** on 15 May 2022. Devasahayam Pillai, who took the name ‘Lazarus’ in 1745, was approved for sainthood in February 2020 for “enduring increasing hardships” after he decided to embrace Christianity.

## **Life as Hindu Nair**

Devasahayam Pillai, was born as Nilakandan Pillai into a Hindu family. Pillai, an upper-caste Hindu Nair convert to Christianity, was a member of the royal service and was close to King Marthanda Varma, then-ruler of Travancore. He was very much loved by the king and was a good man who was faithful to his duty. However, after several bad harvests, he lost his wealth. This devastated him and he wondered: “Who will respect me now that I’m poor”!

## **Thirst for Christianity**

Nilakandan shared his worries with a devout Catholic, a Dutch official by the name of Benedictus Eustachio De Lannoy who explained to him the meaning of suffering in the light of the book of Job. For Nilakandan, Job’s example and his trust in God were decisive. Convinced of the truth of the Christian mysteries Nilakandan asked for Baptism which he received in 1745 from the hands of Fr Giovanni Battista Buttari, a Jesuit missionary after 9 months of preparation. He took the name Devasahayam, the Tamil version of the biblical name Lazarus, which means “God has helped”.

## **Convinced Christian**

On the day of his Baptism, Devasahayam dedicated himself solemnly to Christ: “No one forced me to come; I came by my own free will. I know my heart: He is my God. I have decided to follow Him and I will do so for my whole life”. His life was no longer the same; Devasahayam dedicated himself to the proclamation of the Gospel for four years. “While preaching, he particularly insisted on the equality of all people, despite caste differences. This aroused the hatred of the higher classes, and he was arrested in 1749.



## Arrested and Tortured!

Devasahayam Pillai was made to march from Padmanabhapuram Palace to Aralvaimozhy by soldiers, over a period of a few days. Pillai was treated like a criminal and as was customary in those days for criminals, his body was painted with red and black spots, and was intentionally marched through populated areas, sitting backward on top of a water buffalo through the streets of South Travancore. As a method of torture, he was beaten everyday with eighty stripes, pepper rubbed into his wounds and nostrils, exposed to the sun, and was given only stagnant water to drink. While halting at Puliyoorkurichi, not far away from the Padmanabhapuram Palace of the Travancore king, it is believed that God quenched his thirst by letting water gush through a small hole on a rock, the very place where he knelt to pray. The water hole is still found in the compound of a church at Puliyoorkurichi, about 15 km from Nagercoil.

## Imprisonment and Physical Tortures

Several kinds of physical tortures were inflicted on Blessed Devasahayam Pillai during the three years of his long wait to martyrdom. When he was arrested, he was put in a narrow prison, as small as an oven: just 5 palms high, 1 cubit broad and a little more than 1 cubit long. The prison's door was just 2 palms high. From Puliyoorkurichy, they brought him to a place called Peruvilai where he was put under the custody of the executioner. About the seven-month torture there, Bishop Clement writes: For

seven months he lay under a tree hugging the tree itself with his legs bound in chains and tied to the tree with fetters, so that he could not move about or stand up or recline on the side, but was forced to sit up or lie down on his back.

The laceration of the skin was done by means of “a certain thorny scourge resembling a file”, to make the application of the chilly powder or paste burn more. They also tormented his face. Devasahayam was locked in a prison cell with a few pots of boiling water kept around him with red hot chili power in it. So that he might suffocate and change his mind. But Devasahayam overcame this trial too.

At one of the County headquarters, he was thrown into a prison which was full of biting ants called kadierumbu (Red-ants). Devasahayam was thrown among poisonous Snakes and scorpions. Miraculously he survived from these creatures too. Devasahayam Pillai passed 3 years in prison without bath and did not have any oils to apply to his body.

Thirst was one of the many ways in which Devasahayam Pillai was tortured on many occasions and in many places. Once, near the sea on the buffalo, Devasahayam was “burning with thirst”, but they gave him only the salty sea water (which became drinkable to him because of his prayer). The miraculous rock fountain at Puliyoorkurichy is a constant reminder of this kind of torture

<sup>1</sup> Fr Leon Cruz SDB is Director of Don Bosco Youth Services, Mumbai and a Missionary of Mercy.



## ST DEVASAHAYAM PILLAI

(and God's grace of miraculous water from the rock). There when he asked for water they gave him sewage water. Devasahayam Pillai was usually given only a small portion of cooked rice. Then even the small portion of rice usually given him was stopped, to make him die of hunger.

### Death Sentence

In 1752, the original order of the King and his Dewan was to deport him from Travancore, into the Pandya country, at Aralvaimozhy. He was let off in the forested hills near Aralvaimozhy. There, he is believed to have begun deep meditations, and people from the adjacent villages began visiting the holy man. Christian sources allege that at this time, high caste Hindus plotted to do away with Devasahayam. Some people believe that the soldiers went up the forested hills and tried to shoot Devasahayam, but were unable to fire; after which he took the gun in his hands, blessed it and gave it back to the soldiers to shoot him to death, if they wished to. The soldiers took the gun back and fired at him five times. His body was then callously thrown out near the foothills at Kattadimalai. It was at Kattadimalai in Kanyakumari district that Devasahayam Pillai died on 14 January 1752.

### First Indian Lay Catholic to Sainthood

On 28 June 2012, Pope Benedict XVI authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate a decree regarding the martyrdom of Devasahayam Pillai and he was referred to as "Venerable". On 2 December 2012, a ceremony of

beatification and declaration of martyrdom was held in Nagercoil, in the Roman Catholic diocese of Kottar in Southern India, presided over by Angelo Cardinal Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, acting as Papal Delegate. Devasahayam Pillai is the first lay man to be elevated to the rank of "Blessed" in India (the step preceding raising a person to Sainthood under the Canon Law of the Catholic Church). On 21 February 2020, Pope Francis recognized a miracle attributed to the intercession of Devasahayam, clearing his way to Canonization (Sainthood). Pope Francis will canonise Blessed Devasahayam Pillai, together with six other Beatified Persons, during a Canonisation Mass in St Peter's Basilica in Vatican on 15 May 2022.

### Life Lived for Faith

St Devasahayam died pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. His death occurred in the 40th year of his life, having completed almost seven years after his conversion to Catholic Faith, of which about three years were in chains. During these three years there was no certainty of life or death. It was indeed significant that a reputed palace official was being carried away like an animal (or a sacrificial lamb?) to be slaughtered for no crime other than accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ and living out a totally transformed social life. The thousands of people whose lives he had touched shed tears in their homes and hide-outs. It's a blessed day for Prison Ministry India family, because someone from prison is canonised. We surrender all the innocent prisoners across the globe to our Heavenly Father and ask God to sanctify humanity through their sufferings.



# Saint Titus Brandsma

---

**Br Pradeep Anthony L OFM**

## **Introduction**

Father Titus Brandsma, a Dutch theologian, journalist, and author who forcefully opposed and spoke out against the anti-Jewish laws the Nazis were passing in Germany before World War II, was arrested in January 1942 when Germany invaded the Netherlands. The Nazis told him that he would be allowed to live a quiet life in a monastery if he would announce that Catholic newspapers should publish Nazi propaganda. The Carmelite priest refused, for which he was subject to hardship and starvation in the Dachau concentration camp. He died after he was injected with carbolic acid on July 26, 1942.

## **Responding with Love for Hatred**

“Never be a spectator of unfairness or stupidity, the grave will supply plenty of time for silence,” are the words of Christopher Hitchens that resonate with the stance of Blessed Titus Brandsma. Yes, Blessed Titus Brandsma stood vehemently against Nazi ideologies during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and paid with his life as the price for opposing the Nazis. However, he stands as a role model on how to respond to hatred with love.

## **Brandsma’s Vocation to be a Priest**

Blessed Brandsma was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1881 at Oegeklooster, Netherland, and named Anno Sjoera Brandsma. He was brought up in a pious family. Out of four,

three of his sisters became nuns, and his brother a Franciscan priest. His father was Titus Brandsma and his mother was Tjitsje Postma and they had a small dairy to help make their livelihood. He joined at a very early age to become a Franciscan but his bad health hindered him from going ahead. Yet, later through his perseverance, he joined the Carmelites. During his Novitiate he took the religious name of Titus Brandsma from being Anno Sjoera in honour of his father’s name. The vocation of a Carmelite is to be a contemplative. However, his choice of becoming a journalist didn’t stop him from raising his voice against the Nazi ideologies. He was ordained and became a priest at the age of 24.

## **Brandsma’s Special Traits**

Blessed Brandsma completed his doctorate in philosophy at Rome when he was only 28 years old, and then went on to teach in the Carmelite seminary and at the Catholic University, Nijmegen, Netherlands. He spoke Italian, French, Dutch, English and was able to read Spanish. He was a popular confessor, orator, journalist, author and lobbyist. The peculiar characteristic of Blessed Brandsma was his availability to all. He was recognised noteworthyly for his availability than for his scholarly works. He also worked in various capacities such as president of the university, ecclesiastical advisor to catholic journalists and conducted speaking tour all over the United States. He was also appointed as the spiritual advisor for more than 30 catholic newspapers. He was also meticulous in utilizing his time as the greatest resource person, because of

which he could translate the works of St. Teresa of Avila from Spanish to Dutch and also write meditations on the Stations of the Cross.

### **Cost of Discipleship**

Blessed Brandsma's conviction to stand for the truth was very high. He was strongly against the Nazi ideologies not only in his thoughts, words and deeds but also in his writings. His writings were against anti-Jewish Marriage laws, Nazi propaganda, which made the eyes of the Gestapo, the secret state police of Germany, to fall on him. Blessed Brandsma was arrested on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1942 at the Monastery in Boxmeer. First, he was taken to Scheveningen, Amersfoort, and Cleves. It was the time when priestly ministry was banned, yet Brandsma carried on by giving sacraments to those in need. He made the sign of the cross on the hands of the prisoners, heard their confessions, visited the dead and conducted way of the cross. On account of this he was transferred to the prison that was later recognized as "the largest priest cemetery in the world," the Dachau Concentration Camp.

Blessed Brandsma gave his life by standing for the truth, as he wrote to the prison officials at Scheveningen prison on behalf of Dutch nation stating: "If it is necessary, we will give our lives." Though Blessed Brandsma was made to overwork, was underfed, frequently beaten up, experimented medically yet his compassionate heart prayed for his prison officials. "Not my will but yours be done!" were his loud cry, when he was experimented

with and tortured. These words show us the inner disposition of Blessed Brandsma towards the cross that he was carrying. Blessed Brandsma stood for Truth by not propagating Nazis Ideas in the newspaper. He was finally murdered as a martyr on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1942 by lethal injection at Bavaria, Germany.

### **Brandsma's Sainthood**

"He really responded with love for hate," said Pope John Paul II during the beatification of Blessed Brandsma on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1985. Blessed Brandsma will be canonized on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022 by Pope Francis. Pope Francis acknowledged that recently a miracle has been attributed to Blessed Brandsma. Sources reveal that Fr. Michael Driscoll, O. Carm., was healed from cancer through the intercession of Blessed Titus Brandsma. Fr. Driscoll, O. Carm., gave his testimony to Catholic News Agency in 2018. In 2004, Fr. Driscoll, O. Carm., was diagnosed with advanced Melanoma and his healing was anonymously accepted by a congress of theologians and Cardinals.

At Present Blessed Brandsma is considered as one of the greatest citizens of Nijmegen that ever lived. In 1968, taking the studies on mysticism by Blessed Brandsma, one of the institutions is dedicated after him to the study of spirituality. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022 Blessed Brandsma will be canonized as a saint by Pope Francis. May we all take the inspiration from the life of Blessed Brandsma, to think the Truth, speak the Truth, live the Truth and if necessary, die for the Truth, as we know, the Truth is Christ Himself for every human life.



---

## St Peter Nolasco: Redeemer of the Incarcerated

---


**Fr Antony O de M**

“I was in prison, you visited Me” (Mt 25:36). Peter Nolasco was born in a family of merchants in Barcelona, Spain, in 1189. His parents were Roberto and Julia. He became rich by doing merchant business with his father. For this he made trade business trips to big cities of his time. As he was selling and buying clothes in the city markets in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, he witnessed Catholic Christians being traded for slavery, captured and oppressed by the Moors and Saracens. They were taken to the Moors countries, imprisoned and put behind the bars.

From being a merchant, Peter Nolasco decided to become a Redeemer of incarcerated captives because he discovered Christ in every human being who was deprived of human Dignity, Rights and Freedom. He came to know that a good number of Catholic Christians were abandoning their Faith in Jesus Christ. While Peter Nolasco was reading the scripture, the verse from the Gospel of John 15,13 “Greater Love has no one than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” touched his heart deeply and he decided to work vigorously for Catholic Christians who were in danger of losing and abandoning their faith in Jesus. There is also the religious tradition in our Order that says that Mother Mary of Mercy had appeared or inspired Peter Nolasco to Redeem the captives from the Moors lands since he was a great devotee of

Mother Mary. The love of Peter Nolasco for Mother Mary is also demonstrated by the fact that he named the Order “The Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy” after the name of Mother Mary. He was a simple religious founder of the Order, who never wished to be called General or Superior but rather he called himself as a brother in the Order. Peter Nolasco was very much attracted to the charity works of his time inspired by Math 25.36 which reads “I was in Prison, you visited Me.” Urged on by this verse he committed his life and wealth entirely for incarcerated brethren behind the bars. The order is practicing the fourth Vow of laying down one’s life for the brethren who are in danger of losing their faith. The Order reports that Peter Nolasco had approximately redeemed thirteen thousand Christian captives from Moors lands and Saracens.

The main purpose of Peter Nolasco was to uproot the souls of the Christians from eternal punishments on account of prolonged imprisonment. He wanted earnestly to save the body and soul of those disheartened. The best charity one can do to one’s neighbor is to contribute to the salvation of their souls and pray for the poor captives who carry visible or invisible chains, prisoners of their passions, or deprived of their freedom. Peter Nolasco was canonized on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1628 at Saint Peter’s Basilica, Rome, by Pope Urban VIII. His feast day is celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> May. He is the patron saint of all kinds of captive incarcerated Christians in the world.



## ***FEET WASHING IN TIHAR JAIL: A CHERISHED MEMORY THAT INSPIRES AND CHALLENGES***

---

---

**Sr Elsa Muttathu PBVM**

Tihar Prison in Delhi is the largest complex of prisons in South Asia. I was privileged to be invited by Sr. Inigo, along with 15 other guests, to be a part of the Maundy Thursday celebrations on Wednesday, the 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2022 in Jail No. 4. My ignorance of the geography of Delhi and the location of the jail offered me the opportunity to journey with the Archbishop of Delhi – Most Rev. Anil J. Couto and Fr. P R. John SJ. Archbishop was the main celebrant for the all-in-one celebration of Maundy Thursday, washing of the feet, Good Friday and Easter. Every year the inmates of Tihar Jail look forward to this kind of spiritual celebrations that break the monotony of their daily routine life. During the Holy Week, this year, Sr Inigo along with Sr. Joy SCC (Jail No: 1), Sr. Mercy HF (Jail No: 16) Sr. Celine FCC (Jail No: 8) and Fr. George Peter organised the Washing of the Feet, the most meaningful event, in their respective Jails.


As we entered the heavily guarded iron gates of Gate no.4 of Jail no.4, we were warmly welcomed by Sr. Inigo who had reached the place ahead of us and had made all the necessary arrangements. Once inside the prison complex, those of us who were first time visitors were in for a surprise. It looked as if we were in a well-maintained park or a

serene ashram campus with plenty of trees, fountain and beautiful artistry along the walls.

We saw some men walking around freely and Sr. Inigo introduced one of them as the parish priest and another as the assistant. Only later did we realize that they were also undertrials who were well behaved and given leadership in organizing the prison community and facilitating prayers etc. We were led to the school of arts where chairs and an altar were arranged for about 15 of us visitors. Some 130 inmates crammed themselves on benches and stools. But for the presence of two uniformed police men outside the building, it appeared like a normal function. Musicians and musical instruments were kept ready for the celebration and hymn sheets were also distributed.

Sr. Inigo welcomed our Archbishop Most Rev. Anil Couto and the guests in her own inimitable style placing herself as one among the inmates as their spiritual leader and animator. She emphasized that the inmates were there due to unfortunate circumstances and they were all well behaving people. Our being with them enabled us to have a real feeling of Synodality – walking with the people who are wounded, rejected and forgotten by society.

The Mass began with a very vibrant entrance hymn accompanied by musical instruments. Fr. P R John SJ, Principal of Vidya Jyothi College of Theology quoting Dom Helder Camara focused the liturgical celebration on the Humility of God who was humbler than any humans and hence in solidarity with



many of the inmates who are caught in a moment of weakness.



**FEET WASHING IN TIHAR JAIL**

Archbishop used the occasion to give a touching, healing and meaningful homily and the inmates enjoyed answering his questions on faith. He expressed being in solidarity with them with the words, “you inside here and we outside, all sinners and God’s love and humility reaches out to all without any distinction.” He focused on the servanthood of Jesus while including everyone in the circle of his friendship.

The high point of the experience was when Archbishop knelt before each of the 12 inmates from different countries and washed their feet assisted by Fr. PR John, Fr. George – the PMI Co-ordinator of Northern Region and Fr. Ravi Sagar SJ. When the washing of the feet was over the men were dumbfounded and some started weeping. The singing of the hymns was not only an outpouring of their hearts but also a testament to their inherent talents and giftedness and one could make out they were simply enjoying it. After the Mass, we were served coffee and snacks prepared by the Jail inmates. We were able to move freely among them, listening to their stories and the circumstances that led to their imprisonment.

Communal politics was evident here too though Sr. Inigo seemed to be moving with ease and agility between the prisoners and the administration. With due regard to the prison administration, I must admit that humanization of the prisoners and efforts to integrate them back into society seemed to be their priority. It is evident that

the inmates are given opportunity to give creative expression to their talents in music, art and sculpture. As a sign of their joy and gratitude, they presented our Archbishop and Sr. Inigo beautiful artistic pictures painted by some of them. Looking at their work and interacting with them made me wonder if denial of creative opportunities leads young people to become candidates for prisons.

We were also surprised to find some graduates and even social workers among them. The Delhi government has made arrangements for teachers to go to these jails and conduct education programs for the benefit of the prisoners. Some of us expressed that we wouldn’t mind being inside for a few days to get away from the maddening noise outside! As I was leaving the prison along with other guests, my sentiments were that of pain and joy, the pain of seeing these gifted young men behind bars and the joy of witnessing their hope and faith in Christ. May this joy and hope triumph in their lives. Congratulations to Sr. Inigo and the members of PMI for initiating and organizing such an innovative and meaningful celebration of Maundy Thursday within the prison premises. All of us can be a part of the Prison ministry through our prayers and by extending physical and monetary help; and those of us who are lawyers, social workers, teachers or passionate human beings can come forward and offer their services.

## In Remembrance of Vanitha Shetty

**Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC**

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25,40). Once a baby bird, on seeing the dead body of its grandma, asked the mother bird, ‘Mom, how can we become immortal?’ The mother replied, ‘Whatever we do for ourselves, dies with us but whatever we do for God and others, remains forever. Vanitha Shetty, a prison ministry prayer warrior, is no more in this world but she remains immortal in the hearts of all whom she loved and served.

We were companions in the PMI intercessory group for a short time. But within that short period, she created such an impression on me that her name will remain embedded in my memory for a very long time. I liked the way she prayed; it was very simple but the simplicity of it was its charm. She kept repeating the name of Jesus hundreds of times, praising and thanking him and experiencing his power flowing into her and spreading out to all for whom she prayed. She prayed for the prisoners and their release, their family, the prison official, the whole prison ministry organization and whatever intentions the Spirit inspired her.

Occasionally she used to call me over the phone for a friendly chat. Once I asked about her title “Shetty”. She said that she belonged to a Hindu family but came to know about Jesus through some prayer group members and joined the PMI Intercessory group. Her husband had died years ago when her 2 boys were very small. She struggled but concentrated on bringing up the boys well. Now the elder one is an

advocate for a multinational company and the younger one is still pursuing his studies. She managed a small restaurant, cared for her sons, still remained not re-married and spent much of her time in the Intercessory prayer group.

I was using more of the Bible, especially the Psalms for my intercessory prayer. She showed much interest in the Psalms and so we used to alternate the verses since the Bible we used was of different translations. He had invited me to join the prayer at 3 pm in the Bombay whatsapp group and had sent me the link. But as most of the members used Marati which I could not follow, I discontinued.

Vanitha was an active member of the Prison ministry group doing various types of services for the welfare of prisoners and contributed much for the expenses. She was a regular visitor at the Observation Centre and used to teach them cooking and other useful works. We miss you Vanitha, especially your PMI group members. You were a committed prison ministry volunteer and a fervent intercessor. We believe that you are in heaven seeing Jesus face to face and interceding for us on earth, the prisoners, the Director and the whole PMI organization, the volunteers, benefactors and friends.

May you hear the voice of the Eternal King calling you, “Come blessed of my Father, enter into the Kingdom prepared for you, for I was in prison hungry and thirsty for many things but you cared for my needs and prayed for my renewal, release and rehabilitation. Your sons, family members and the PMI group wanted you so much on earth but the Lord wanted you in heaven. As you enjoy the Bliss in your heavenly abode, remember us and pray for us.



# PMI Karnataka State Executive Body Meeting

## Sr Theresa Mascarenhas SCB

The Karnataka PMI executive Meeting was held on 22 April 2022 at “Chaitanya” – SMSS, Shimoga under the chairmanship of Most Rev Francis Serrao, Bishop of Shimoga. The meeting began with a prayer led by Sr Helen. Thereafter the Secretary read the agenda. The Minutes of the previous meeting were read by Sr. Mable and were passed by the members. Sr. Laveena B.S proposed its adoption and Bro Dolphy seconded. The Activity report of the Karnataka State PMI Unit for the period 2016 to March 2022 was presented by the Secretary which was proposed for adoption by Mr. Walter Martice and seconded by Sr. Helen Moras SCB. The Election to the Karnataka State PMI Executive Committee was taken up by the Chairman of the meeting, Bishop Francis Serrao.

## PMI Karnataka New Governing Body

1. Coordinator – Sr. Theresa Mascarenhas SCB. – Shimoga Diocese
2. Assistant Coordinator – Mr Walter Martice – Udupi Diocese.
3. Secretary - Dr Michael Noronha: Mysore Diocese.
4. Joint Secretary – Sr. Lavina BS– Belgaum Diocese.
5. Treasurer – Sr. Susheela SAB – Gulbarga Diocese.

6. Ms Veera (Bangalore Diocese) and Mr Jerome (Mangalore Diocese) - Two Lay persons nominated by the general body.
7. Sr. Clara – Ex officio – Women’s Rehabilitation Centre Representative.
8. Sr. Bazil – Ex officio – Kolbe Home Representative.
9. Sr. Vyakula Mary –Ex-officio – Premodaya Children’s Home Representative.

It was decided to select half the members of unit coordinators (if it is equal or one less if it is not equal) by the Executive Team after ascertaining the number of units which are functional in each diocese. The elections were conducted fairly and as per the rules in the presence of Bishop Francis Serrao and Sr Amala the national secretary. Bishop congratulated the newly elected members. In his address to the members, the bishop spoke of the work of Prison Ministry as indeed the work of God. He appreciated the good work of the PMI Units. Bishop cautioned the members to give it a thought on whether they need to take over the Government’s work. He advised the members to work for the fulfilment of the Vision of PMI – Renewal, Release, Reform, Rehabilitation, Counselling and family visits.

The Diocesan Activity reports from April 2021 to March 2022 of the following Dioceses were read out: Udupi, Mangalore, Shimoga, Karwar, Belgaum, Mysore, Gulbarga, and Bangalore. And Srs. Basil, Clara and Vyakula Mary gave few details of the rehabilitation homes and invited

## PMI KARNATAKA MEETING

members to refer the beneficiaries to these respective centres. The Coordinator and the Secretary appreciated the good work by the teams.

Thereafter Sr. Clara advised the newly elected members to concentrate more on opening new PMI units in the State of Karnataka where there are no PMI units. Sr. Amala informed the PMI members to participate in the National PMI programmes that were initiated as part of the Ruby Jubilee Year which will be extended up to the Golden Jubilee Celebration Year of PMI. She said that the scholarship target had reached nearly 85%; the Release of prisoners and building of homes for released prisoners was also progressing well. She requested the members to collect the raffle ticket books and mobilise funds for the programmes.

The members decided to request the Bishops of Karnataka to form the Diocesan Teams in their respective Dioceses. One of the members informed the National Team that the Bishops should be given a presentation on the hierarchy so that the difference between a Local unit, Diocesan Unit, State Executive and National Committee is properly explained. Members also expressed their desire to bring it to the notice of the bishops not to appoint Priests who are not interested in the Ministry as Diocesan Directors. They were of the opinion that by appointing such disinterested priests, the Ministry would suffer much.

The Secretary then took up the discussion on the Action Plan for 2022-2023. The

Members unanimously decided to: 1) Complete the survey of defunct units/ units yet to be started in the Prison in every diocese. 2) To conduct the Karnataka State PMI Convention prior to the National Convention, either in Chickmagalur or Shimoga or Bangalore in the order of preference. It was decided that the new Executive Team would visit Chickmagalur on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2022 for a discussion with the Bishop and the Chickmagalur PMI Team. The general body has agreed to hold the convention in July or September 2022.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Bishop, the Members of the National Team, outgoing Executive Members, PMI Diocesan units, and the Director and staff of Chaitanya for their hospitality in making all the arrangements. A Eucharistic celebration was offered by Fr Benny in which intercessory prayers were made for the PMI Mission as well as for the Bishop and the Director and staff of Chaitanya for their hospitality in making all the arrangements. The program ended with a sumptuous lunch for the members hosted by the Bishop of Shimoga and the Team of Chaitanya.

### St Deva Sahayam Pillai

First Indian Lay Martyr Saint

Born : 23 April 1712,

Palliyadi, Kanyakumari District

Died : 14 January 1752

Resting Place: Kottar, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

Feast : 14 January

Beatified : 2 December 2012

Canonised : 15 May 2022

Patronage

Persecuted Christiansa




# Every Saint has a Past and every Sinner a Future!

**Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**

Many poverty-stricken children leave home in search of good fortune and end up in prisons on committing a series of crimes. On account of poverty and hunger Ravi (name changed) ran away from home one day in search of a fortune. He wandered along the streets and landed among street boys. He learned soon to adjust with the life of children on the street and picked up every type of bad actions of the children there. He learned to be totally on his own and earned his living from the street and became totally a child of the street. His friends took him to their masters who were professional pickpockets. He was apprenticed to them and eventually excelled in the nefarious art of pick pocketing. The money that was picked was usually squandered in liquor shops and such other places. He thrived in the business for about twenty-two years and finally came back to his home as a renewed man and lived with his mother as he had lost his father by then.

Although he wanted to lead a life with a bright future, his terrible past didn't open a way for it. One day Ravi went to steal in a mentally challenged elderly woman's house as she had a big gold chain on her neck. It was a day of power-cut and Ravi finished the job successfully. All the villagers were in search of the thief but he could not be identified. Ravi was interrogated but he denied involvement in the theft. Pieces of broken glass had been fixed on the walls of the woman's house in order to keep away thieves at night. A fresh scar seen on Ravi's hand betrayed him and when he was asked about the theft, he banged his head against the walls and threatened to kill himself. Pick pockets usually swallow what they steal and so he was taken to the hospital. When his stomach was exposed to x-rays the films revealed the gold chain in his stomach. The chain was extracted safely and returned to the owner.

Ravi was arrested. His mother spent hours before the crucifix and pleaded for the mercy



of the living Lord on Ravi. His mother was a devout woman who led a life of prayer and served in a Retreat Centre. Her incessant prayers slowly began to work on him. His mother spent her time in reading the Word of God and praying over it. She believed strongly that the God who formed Ravi in her womb had the power to redeem him from the clutches of evil. Gradually, Ravi started being receptive to the promptings of the Spirit and experienced a thirst for the Word of God.

He repented of all his wrongdoings and decided to work hard. He recalled his early childhood, the love of his parents and cried bitterly, asked pardon from the Lord for rejecting the love and care of his parents who wished nothing for him except good. Once he had thought that money and material things would make him feel that he was better than others, but now he realized that those cravings made him only the poorest of the poor. Ravi who longed for earthly freedom became a renewed person and yearned for the love of the Lord by participating in spiritual activities. Ravi said that it was the Word of God that had released him from his evil ways. Soon he was released from prison and began to lead a meaningful life.

“God makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45). God loves the sinner but hates the sin. God came down because He wanted everyone to be saved. Jesus called Matthew the tax gatherer, because He knew that this sinner would have a future. Jesus went in search of the one lost sheep, because He knew that the lost sheep would have its future. Jesus forgave the woman who was caught in adultery and blessed her, for He knew that she too would have her future. Yes, every saint has a past and every sinner a future! Never give up on life, for we have a God who is never tired of forgiving. Embrace life with hope, for we have a God who restores, renews, reinstates and recreates every broken being! Jesus remarked about sinful people to righteous people. Although prisons are filled with hard-core criminals, terrorists, rapists, hired-killers, thieves, grace too flows there in abundance. Who can stop the flow of the mercy of God?



---

# Prison Ministry India

---

**Sr Celia UMI**

## **The Genesis**

PMI began with much enthusiasm in December 1981. I want to say at the very outset of my essay that the enthusiasm which I had in the beginning continues to this day because the Founders, Fr. Varghese Karippery and Fr. Francis Kodiyan, are still continuing in the field. The spirit is admirable within these priests. I do know much about the commitment of Fr. Varghese Karippery but here I wish to mention specifically that Fr. Francis too is very impressive; his humble, dedicated, committed and prayerful life is truly edifying. He is a good leader who can train people and make good leaders.

## **Guiding Principles**

I attended the PMI Volunteers Training Program but it seemed more like a retreat. The style of training was like that. So much importance was given to prayer, and that too in front of the Blessed Sacrament exposed. When PMI could not visit jails, Fr. Francis started 24-hour prayer. He gave each person half an hour slot, even at night. Fr. Francis too prays much. Indeed prayer is the secret of success of the PMI. The PMI motto – prayer our power house, inconvenience our convenience, God’s providence our bank balance, begging our lifestyle and our goal saving the lost. The PMI motto is “be a love bomb that is to be exploded not to kill but to heal the broken hearted”.



## **Historical Introspection**

In 1986, the first prayer group was formed and the new prayer group began preparation for all Kerala prison pilgrimage under the directorship of Fr. Thomas Vellilamthadam. In the year 1989 KCBC recognized Jesus Fraternity under its Justice Peace and Development Commission and appointed Fr Joseph Mackolil as its director and Fr Francis Kodiyan as its assistant director. In 1991 Jesus Fraternity launched the first rehabilitation centre for released male prisoners at Vettukad, Thrissur and 1992 a home for released women prisoners at Monvila, Trivandrum.

## **Prison Ministry India**

In 1994 during the first national convention, Bengaluru, the new name Prison Ministry India was adopted. Fr. Varghese Karippery was elected as the first National Co-Ordinator. A home for released women prisoners run by Holy Cross Sisters, Bengaluru, was blessed in the year 1995. In the same year, registration of PMI was done as a society, under the registration Act No ER. 375/95. It was a great success. The home for the released women has been very successful and it still continues to do good work. The success of the home is attributed to the commitment of Sr. Clara and Sr Fidelis. They stay together as a family with the inmates. They come together, eat together and work together. This makes a great difference to the released women. It is not easy for religious to be like that. May God bless both of them so that they can

run the house happily and the inmates have a home as well. They were able to have a number of marriages held in that house for the destitute ladies. Most of them are leading a successful life.

### **Homes for Prisoners Children**

Fr. Sebastian Theckanath, the second national Co-Ordinator, was elected in the 4<sup>th</sup> national convention, in the year 1998. In the year 2002 Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan took charge as the 3<sup>rd</sup> national Co-Ordinator. It took place in the year 2002. In the year 2002, PMI received the Spirit of Assisi national award by the Franciscan centre for peace and dialogue Karukutty, Kerala. CBCI decided to celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday on the Second Sunday of August every year. In 2007, Fr. Josekutty Kalayil MST took charge as the 4<sup>th</sup> National co-ordinator. Prison Voice, the PMI national monthly magazine was launched in the year 2004. Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan was once again elected as the National Co-ordinator. He initiated Kolbe Home for prisoners' children which was blessed by most Rev. Bernard Moras, Archbishop of Bengaluru in the year 2015. The fifth national Co-ordinator was Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS, who took charge in 2019.

### **Extension to Parishes**

I appreciate very much Prison Ministry India's activities. They are working for the insignificant and the most unwanted people of society with love and care. By

now it has spread throughout India. Now PMI is planning to establish its units in all the parishes. If we can spread this ministry everywhere, our society will be transformed. Any social work could have the aim of changing society. As PMI National team as well as regional team are working tirelessly for the integral development of prisoners, change in society is inevitably seen.

### **Prisoners' Families**

I understand that more than prisoners we have to work for their families and society. Once crimes stop, jails will not be filled. The training for volunteers was very much educative. It also helped everyone to be enthusiastic in the Prison Ministry. Staying here helped us to be more spiritual. Truly spirituality and prayer are the backbone of Prison Ministry India. Volunteers are transformed towards the Lord. The visit to Central Jail and Open Jail also helped us very much. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude towards the PMI team. May God continually bless them to go forward in the PMI.

I have taken the following decisions for PMI: 1) once a month to visit the open Jail, Devanahalli; 2) celebrate May Day in the open jail; 3) pay a visit twice a week to either a prison or the families of prisoners; 4) I will continue intercessory prayer 2:30-4.00 a.m.; and 5) I will continue the task force activities too.



---

## Vanitha Shetty: In Memoriam


---

**Mrs Prescilla Fernandes**

In Wisdom ch3: v1 to 4 we read, “The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them. In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to die, their going looked like a disaster, their leaving us, like annihilation; but they are at peace. If they experienced punishment as men see it, their hope was rich with immortality; slight was their affliction, great will their blessings be”. We have gathered at this Eucharistic table to celebrate life that comes from God and life that goes back to God. And God gave to us a dear sister, a very cheerful soul, a faithful friend and an enthusiastic PMI volunteer ... in Vanitha Shetty. Job ch 1: v 21. says God gives, God takes... blessed be the name of God this day.

Vanitha’s stay with us, short but full of sweetness and savour, that is going to last in the hearts and minds of us volunteers, for a long time. I’m sure each of you will have something unique to recall about Vanitha... that was the work of the Holy Spirit in her. I met Vanitha at a prayer meeting in Bandra, Mumbai in 2019. We happily introduced ourselves. In the course of our conversation, when she learnt that I am a Prison Ministry volunteer, she was excited and requested to join prison ministry.

She was already a regular member of another Prison Ministry group in Bandra, led by Sr. Rosita. I forwarded her no. to Rowena Luis, then secretary of Prison Ministry Mumbai. After attending the online training session in Mumbai, conducted by Fr Glasten, our director, she joined PMM Dongri unit, as a volunteer. This brought her much joy. As soon as the lockdown lifted up, she made her way to Dongri and she stayed committed to this ministry till her the end. She even went twice a week to reach out to the children. Together with Marie they made a great team. The two of them conducted cooking classes teaching the girls at



the Dongri Observation Home, to cook, simple yet tasty food. The girls loved her and eagerly looked forward to her visits. With her cheerful disposition, she not only won the hearts of the children, but the Superintendent and staff at Dongri too. Such was her passionate heart. She was very generous and would keep contact with everyone.

She would often call me, lovingly calling me Prescilla Akka, late evening and we would share lots of fun things together. Likewise, she had, this extraordinary manner of creative positivity and charm, mixed with a profound respect for authority and every other human being, that she encountered. I’m sure we will all remember, at least one episode of her, responding with a spirit of kindness.

Vanitha was a widow for many years, with 2 sons. She had her share of stressful situations, but her deep faith in God, took her through everything, every time. I’ve known this, that whenever she was disturbed or had to take some important decision in life, she would go and sit before the Blessed sacrament and she would get inspiration from Jesus, what to do. And this enabled her to carry on from one area to the next. She used to join everyday at our 3pm Prison Ministry Mumbai intercessory prayers online... taking part in the Divine Mercy chaplet and actively participating in the daily Gospel sharing, Vanitha and I were prayer partners at 6.30pm in the beginning, for 24x7 national intercessory prayers, till I changed to 4.30 pm. She used to read the Bible daily and attend Mass.

She would go out of the way to help youth to get jobs. Proverbs ch 11: v25 says, that the generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. Vanitha reached out with charity and compassion, to everyone she encountered. I believe God will pour forth times of refreshment, upon the soul of our dear friend and sister, Vanitha.

Eternal rest grant unto her soul O Lord  
And let perpetual light shine upon her  
May her soul rest in peace

Amen.



# TRANSFORMED

---

**Terence Monterio**

My tears fill the vale below,  
Tears, not of grief, but of joy!  
Like water that flowed from You,  
From your side, from your heart.

You have spoken to your servant, Lord,  
My soul rejoiced in thanks and praise!  
For that great sacrifice you made,  
On your amazing cross!

I feel your blood and water flow, sweet Jesus,  
I see your peaceful face that radiates!  
A heart forgiven, bathed in love,  
O it flows like a waterfall, a torrent.

O Lord, I was born of my mother here,  
Her flesh and blood in me,  
But when you enter in, dear Lord,  
I am transformed, yes transformed!

My flesh cleansed by your perfect body,  
My blood sanctified by yours, precious,  
My hands, feet, face, eyes, organs,  
My heart, soul, mind and spirit.

What more can I ask, Lord?  
You have filled me up!!




## Visit to Three Central Prisons

---

**Regina**

Sr. Usha Rani CSA reported: "All of us were excited to visit two jails at Cherlapalli and were happy to speak to those prisoners on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022". The superintendents, jailors and welfare officers received us well and gave us sufficient time to be with the inmates at Open Air jail, Cherlapally. A singing competition was organized under the supervision of the diocesan coordinator Rev. Fr. Mettu Johannes Reddy who announced prizes for the competitors. The participant inmates were presented medals wholeheartedly by the hands of the Superintendent who also distributed Hygiene kits to all the inmates. Our volunteers enacted two small skits that made the jailors smile, forgetting their stress and strain. Thus the visit to both the Open air Jail and Central prison at Cherlapally was well planned and systematically organized by our Ex-Officio Mr. M.D. Vincent. Thanks to the Secretary Regina, Assistant Coordinator Mrs. Brigit Michael and the State Coordinator Rev. Fr. Dion Isaac due to whose dedicated hard work the day's program went off extremely well. The welfare officer asked us to visit them as often as possible and requested our assistance in educating the children of the poor inmates. Hygiene kits were distributed to all the inmates. The day was so fruitful thanks to the continued support and blessings of our Archbishop Poola Anthony, the chairman of PMI in both the Telugu States."

Regarding our Visit to Central Jail at Chenchalaguda, Hyderabad, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2022, Sr Leena Fernandez of Nirmala sisters reports: "The Prison Ministry India Volunteers had the privilege of visiting the old Central Jail at Chanchalguda on 10/4/2022. Since 6 years, visits to the prisons were stopped but the passion for the prison ministry kept the volunteers doing



what was necessary and possible especially offering prayers and meeting and writing to different officials in order to request them to open the doors of the prison. Thanks be to God who listened to our prayers by allowing us to visit three prisons in April 2022. We could see the depression and sadness on the faces of the prisoners. The words of a young man are still ringing in my ears: "I want to go out, my family is waiting! As we walked with the jailer, who took us around showing all the Barracks, the Jailer explained the need to guide the youth in society because they lack proper formation in the families. It is our responsibility to communicate to young people the terrible consequences they would face in jail by breaking the laws of the land. It would be placing their future and their family at stake. Prison Ministry is a noble service, inviting our attention to the neglected ones. The distribution of hygiene kits to the prisoners and assuring them of our prayers was a small gesture of kindness which convinced them that they are not abandoned but that we are with them in their suffering and pain. We thank God for this beautiful opportunity."

One would wonder at the pin drop silence and strict discipline prevailing inside the prison. The authorities organize Inner mulakath also between inmates and their families. The marvelous neatness of the premises was well taken care of by the authorities. Hats off to their patience and counselling. The inmates were very receptive. A short visit brought a smile which was longer than a mile on the faces of the inmates, authorities and all volunteers. A deep bow to the kind hearted IG Jithenderji, DIG Murali Babu Garu and all the Superintendents as well as Jailers who made this event possible for distributing a total of 3786 Hygiene kits in all three jails. Thanks to Sr. Shanatha, Mrs Brigit Michael, Mr. M.D. Vincent and Fr. Mettu Joannes who partially contributed financial assistance for the success of the event. All glory to our Almighty God!






## **Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow: Break the Bias**

---

**Sr Sophiya Thomas FCC**

The International Women's Day on 8 March 2022 was celebrated for the Women prisoners of Central Jail Bhopal with the Theme "Gender equality today for a sustainable Tomorrow - Break the Bias" along with the District Legal Service Authority Bhopal. After a long break of celebration in the Prison, due to Corona Women's Day celebration brought great joy and happiness in women prisoners.

Each day, women are overcoming all sorts of obstacles, breaking rules to achieve their goals, dreams, with utmost determination and belief, seeking to make their life better and most importantly ensure gender equality. Break the Bias: This is why we celebrate International Women's Day. On International Women's Day, we feel proud to join the global community in celebrating the achievements and contributions of women and girls from around the world, while simultaneously recognizing the barriers they continue to face. We commemorate the cultural, political, and socio-economic achievements of women. We aim to spread the message of gender equality and promote a better society where there is no gender bias. Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and



celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality. Collectively we can all Break the Bias. Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions - all day, every day. We can break the bias in our communities. We can break the bias in our workplaces. We can break the bias in our schools, colleges and universities. Together, we can all break the bias - and go beyond.

Smt. Giri Bala Singh, Chairman District Legal Services, Bhopal, addressed the woman prisoners on the day's theme. Each programme presented in Speech, Song, Dance and Poem by the inmates and FCC candidates and sisters loudly proclaimed the theme of the day. It was a memorable day for the women prisoners. Many women while listening and watching the programme shed tears of joy for their womanhood and for affirming their strengths. With tea and snacks the programme came to an end.

### **Cardinal Zen's Arrest and Release**

Hong Kong's national security police granted bail to Cardinal Joseph Zen and three activists hours after arresting them. Cardinal Zen, 90, a former bishop of Hong Kong, was arrested along with senior advocate Margaret Ng, activist and pop singer Denise Ho and former academic Hui Po-keung on May 11. Cardinal Zen was questioned for several hours at Chai Wan Police Station close to his church residence before his release. He left the police station without making any comment to the media.



---

## Tihar Maundy Thursday Celebrations

---

**Ashley Noel Concessao**

“Tihar School of Arts” had the unique opportunity of hosting the ‘Maundy Thursday’ celebrations on 13th April, 2022 at Tihar Jail No: 4. We, the inmates were privileged to have had the presence of Archbishop of Delhi, Most Rev. Anil Couto who, at the invitation of Sr. Inigo, had taken time off from his busy schedule to come personally to this Jail to include us in the Holy week celebrations along with 15 visitors – priests, nuns and other friends. Sr. Inigo and Fr. George Peter MST deserve special thanks for their regular visits to this jail. Their constant accompanying presence made the function very successful. They brought with them all the requirements for celebrating the Mass while we made the necessary preparations for making the day not only meaningful but also memorable in our life.

We had the opportunity to make a good confession and prepare ourselves to receive Communion after a long time. The very presence of our Archbishop, the clergy and Sisters boosted the morale of all the inmates who briefly felt that they were attending Mass in a very grand Church outside. The atmosphere was serene and pleasant. Archbishop preached a very good homily both in Hindi and English. He explained the real meaning of the washing of the feet. We received his message with rapt attention.

The Choir, aptly supported by musical instruments, added to the prayerful atmosphere and everyone appreciated the joyous and heart-warming music and singing.

After the homily, Archbishop washed the feet of 12 of us, reminding us of what Jesus had done on the First Maundy Thursday and what our Holy Father Pope Francis did in the first year of his Pontificate. We cannot express in words what an experience it was for all of us as we could scarcely believe the Archbishop himself going down on his knees, washing our feet and wiping them. I sincerely hope and pray that the lessons of humility and serving others that we learnt from this event will remain in our hearts and in our life forever.

After the service, we also had the privilege of interacting with the Archbishop and other visitors. This also was very uplifting and we received the blessings of the Archbishop. The celebrations, the interactions and the blessings opened our minds and hearts in leading us to repentance and inner freedom. Most of us felt that there had never been a more meaningful Holy Week as this! May God be glorified! Jesus has opened the gates of freedom for us and now it is up to us to follow this path. The choice is ours.



# **PMI Volunteers Training Program 2022: An Appraisal**

---

**Sr Sherly OSB**

## **Introduction**

The Prison Ministry India organized the volunteers training programme from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 9<sup>th</sup> April to strengthen and acquaint them with the pros and cons of the ministry that is being carried out across the nation. The beauty of prison ministry lies in Jesus Christ who was jailed, beaten, despised, condemned and rejected under Pontius Pilate. It was Jesus who opened the first rehabilitation centre for prisoners on the cross when he whispered to the good thief “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23,43).

## **Systematic Program**

The program was well organized, meticulously planned and systematically carried out with proficient whizzes by those who are well versed in the field. All the resource persons who animated the group were highly spirited and it simply enthralled us to become ‘LOVE BOMBS’. All their experiences and knowledge inspired, motivated and boosted our hearts to throb and to plunge into action as they were highly informative, creative and motivating. With his wonted sweet and broad smile Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS welcomed all the participants. Sr Amala took keen interest to see that all the activities were done in time and she ensured that timely.

## **Chairman’s Message**

Most Rev Allwyn D’Silva, the Chairman of PMI deepened the spirituality of the volunteers in a most amazing way. He emphasised that there is no one beyond redemption and everyone is redeemed in Jesus Christ. The act of serving prisoners in the name of Jesus must become our spirituality.

## **PMI Founders**

The very root of PMI goes back to its conception from the vision and interest shared by Fr Vargheese Karippery and Fr. Francis Kodiyan in St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary. A little seed that was sown in their mind infused with the love of Christ for the brethren behind the bars made them to ‘DREAM BIG’. Fr Francis Kodiyan stressed upon the importance of prayer. The very success of PMI is that its strength comes from the ‘Power Bank of Jesus’ and the most significant one is the necessity of being seated in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to draw power from there.

## **Ministry Inside the Prison**

Sr. Adela’s heart touching experience with the prisoners and the unsurpassable tasks that she had undertaken for their release and rehabilitation, visiting their families, freeing them from their guilt, shame, fear and revengeful attitude to become fully loving sons or daughters of Jesus, and above all, the courage that she had shown for the burial of the dead with sisterly care, touched the core of the participants. Similar accomplishments from Sr. Fidelis and Sr Clara, the earlier struggle to root

up PMI in Bangalore, with their outreach programmes to rehabilitate prisoners, was highly inspiring.

### **Legal Procedures**

The session by Adv. Titto Paul enlightened and captured the mindset of everyone as he demonstrated all the relevant points with which one should be equipped. The explanations of the legal terms such as FIR, charge sheet, summons, bail order, anticipatory bail, E-court, surety etc enriched everyone. Fr. Ravi Sagar S.J elucidated the topic of Human Rights and illuminated the word meaning of Human Rights and then in detail illustrated for our benefit the rights of the prisoners. The counselling session directed by Fr. Jaison Puthenpurackal prompted each of us to sharpen our attentiveness through counselling skills. He also highlighted the topic of Special Task Force.

### **Regional, State and Diocesan Administration**

Fr. Wilfred Fernandes threw light on the regional level ministry and the activities undertaken by them. Fr. Shaji Stephen dealt in his session on the responsibilities of state coordinators, directors, secretaries of units at the local and at the diocesan level and their very functioning. Fr. Clement Deep laid bare before the participants how Karnataka State takes care of its activities and how they motivate the volunteers to

arm themselves with ascetical practices having deep roots in prayer etc. Mrs Nisha and Mrs Veera enlightened all regarding the duties of treasurers and secretaries.

### **PMI Basic Principles**

Sr. Lini Sheeja elaborated beautifully on the meaning of emblem and the basic principles of PMI in relation to Jesus. Jesus went in search of one sheep leaving 99 out there. This should be the brashness with which each participant has to serve our brethren behind the bars. There is no one beyond redemption.

### **Best Practices**

Fr. Sebastain Vadakumpadan, the former National coordinator, stirred us all with the best practices of prison visits. It was an eye opener for everyone to know the way to behave oneself while visiting it and to bear in mind what one needs to observe during the time one is over there. Mr. Reni George shared his experience in jail and how God transformed him into an ambassador of Christ to render a service to society. Jesus stoops down and makes the impossible possible to those who repent and turn back.

### **Special Task Forces**

Fr. Michael Francis through his systematic and logical presentation led us to understand the Special Task Forces and the background behind them. Sr. Anisha S.D, Sr. Beena, Fr. Biju and Fr. Rojo also explained the way they collaborate and cooperate with the will God and the wonderful work they do in their own

respective areas. Fr. Sebastain Theckanath, the former National coordinator reminded the participants about the necessity of outreaching our help to the staff, their families and the officials.

### **Homes for Prisoners' Children**

Sr. Basil pointed out to us that Kolbe Home is truly heaven on earth for the prisoner's children. Every child there is an uncut diamond and we are there to mould the personality of every child to its best expression. Mrs. Rowana drew our attention to the ongoing intercessory prayers and that we reap what we sow and she shared the use of the victory method for prayer.

### **Ministry Outside Prison**

Fr. Benny Pachanal CRSP infused in everyone in a capsule form the ministries outside the prison. Sr. Amala expatiated on PMI projects such as Retreats of the volunteers, Burning bush and incessant intercessory prayers, etc in a nut shell. She also invited us to imbibe the spirit of PMI economy i.e., prayer fund, suffering fund, penance fund, self -sanctification fund and material fund.

### **Red Street Ministry**

Mr. Anson Thomas exposed us to some valid information about the sex racket which is at work in red-street areas. By the grace of God, he has released more than 800 women from brothels.

### **Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reintegration**

Fr. Francis Kodiyan elucidated further on prisoners' reformation and reintegration theories. The presentation of 3 R theory and the Eightfold path for prisoners' reform and reintegration served the whole purpose of Prison Ministry in tablet form. Bro. Pradeep shared his experience with PMI and put it forward in a most attractive and relevant way.

### **Tihar Prison Ministry**

Sr. Inigo in a very simple but profound style expounded the interest, initiative and the heart-throbbing desire she had to be in the service of the brethren behind the bars. Her commitment, readiness and eagerness triggered the volunteers to bloom in this ministry. Sr. Jobina from North East region took us for a walk, so to say, to get to learn about the various mighty works of God they do in serving the least, lost and the last.

### **Valedictory Ceremony**

Sr Rose Chirayil DC, provincial of Daughters of Charity gave the valedictory message and distributed the certificates to the participants. Sr Adele Korah SCCG and Sr Vyakula Mary from Premodaya felicitated everyone. Sr Sherly OSB did the appraisal of the Volunteers Training Program.



## **Charles De Foucauld: Herald of Third Millennium Spirituality**

**Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS**

The fifteenth book of Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the cofounder of the PMI is indeed a spiritual treat not only to PMI family but also to the world because the content of this book has universal value. As human beings are spiritual essentially, this book will satiate the thirst of the human soul for the Spiritual Quotient. In the Acknowledgement, Fr Francis Kodiyan explains the depth of influence knowing Foucauld had on him during his seminary days and how he enthusiastically shared it with his initial prayer group, namely 'Jesus Fraternity.' Later on, he completed his doctoral thesis on the 'Conversion of Charles de Foucauld as the application of personal religious conversion.


The Message given by Bishop Allwyn comprises of the spirituality of blessed Foucauld and how it helps the present individualistic and consumeristic society. In the forward Br Paul Raj SG links Charles de Foucauld to the title of universal brother by quoting the encyclical Fratelli Tutti on Fraternity and social friendship. In the Preface Sr Navya Maria LSC explains about Foucauldian spirituality as the third millennium spirituality which is characterised by charity, poverty, contemplation, zeal for souls, love for Jesus and a call to live in small fraternity by adoring the Lord. She writes that Charity makes a person available and hospitable.

There are totally eight chapters in this book to explain about the herald of the third millennium. The first chapter is the crux of all the other chapters which prompts me to elaborate particularly on it. This chapter specifically covers the life and mission of Foucauld, as it portrays Foucauld as a fallen

seed who lost himself completely in Jesus and brought forth hundred-fold fruits after hundred years (Jn12:24). There are about 18 indigenous spiritual families that have sprouted from his spirituality. In 1904, he started a hermitage at Tamanrasset to serve the Tuaregs. The seven means of converting unbelievers were: 1. Offering sacrifice, 2. Spending time In front of the Blessed Sacrament, 3. Goodness, 4. Prayer, 5. Penance, 6. Good Example and 7. Personal Holiness.

In the second chapter, Foucauldian Conversion Trajectory is dealt with. For Foucauld, returning to God meant much more of contemplative love than merely a peripheral turn. Many believe that for Foucauld an extraordinary grace was given when he had gone to confess to Fr. Huvelin at St. Augustine's. Conversion is not a sudden but rather a gradual and progressive development. Conversion trajectory has four stages: pre-formative, formative, per-formative and post-formative. The pre-formative stage outlines the influence of scepticism, materialism and atheism around him, as he had been controlled by the senses. In the formative stage a person is moved by human values, repents and returns to family values, gets attracted to religious values, serving the least, despised, abandoned and becomes a priest in order to imitate Christ. The per-formative stage has the element of discerning God's will and doing it. The post-formative stage has the dimension of influencing the Church, others and the world.

In the third chapter, Foucauldian Conversion types are explained namely: the affective, intellectual, moral, religious, and Christian. On the affective level he experiences love from family. In the intellectual level, the works that he does are not for his self-glory but rather for God's glory, as manifested in writing a dictionary for the Tuaregs. On the Moral level, the works done were for the well-being of his own society. Thus he re-joins



the army for his country with courage and boldness. On the religious level, he searched very willingly for God, with the help of his spiritual director, and was able to find God.

In the fourth chapter, Foucauldian Conversion Sources and Means are explained. The source is connected to the Triune God. Foucauld realized that his conversion was because of the Grace of God. It was in the Blessed Sacrament and Sacred Scriptures, he found the Trinitarian God. He had grown in theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Faith for him was that which replaced natural senses. Hope was having the firm belief that Jesus will save us. Love for him was obeying with promptness; it was infinite respect for each man. The means included his own family, cousin, spiritual director Abbe Huvelin, Muslim and Jewish religious people's zeal for God, lofty souls like Marie de Bondy, Prayer with attention, discerning the will of God through retreats, self-analysing by awareness, silence and solitude, journeys, reading inspiring books and crises that made him return to God.

In the fifth chapter his Spiritual Trajectory is explained which was a call to holiness, a call to conversion. Conversion involves transformation, actualization, transcendence, divinisation and socio-political consciousness. It could be understood as the Purgative, Illuminative and finally Unitive way by Pseudo Dionysius. St. Theresa of Avila's interior castle and St. John of the Cross's Ascent of Mount Carmel also are taken as examples to explain his Spiritual Trajectory. A soul attains spiritual marriage at the Unitive stage.

In the sixth chapter, Foucauldian Spiritual Trajectory is from the lowest obsession to the highest theism. Discursive prayer is at the initial period, then vocal and finally meditation prayer will lead to deep contemplation. Foucauld could arrive at the stage of contemplation and say I'm not alone. At contemplation level prayer



## CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

becomes simpler and more affective. He was just there gazing and loving the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He lived mystically united to the Lord, exhibiting theological, cardinal and evangelical virtues.

The seventh chapter is the Third Millennium Spirituality, in which is described radical conversion as the call for the third millennium. Christian conversion is to be seen as Christocentric than merely a psychological fact. A converted life is to be a Pneumatic or a spirit filled life. Conversion also will touch upon the ecclesial, missiological and salvific aspects. Ascetical entails self-denial and self-emptying. Incarnational spirituality means being humble and simple. Nazareth spirituality calls one to be little, poor and having a strong desire to follow Christ closely. Foucauldian spirituality is Biblical, Eucharistic, formed for the least, lost and the last. Fraternity means the spring of friendship to Foucauld, discerning what is most wanted as per the will of God. Pilgrim spirituality is introduced by Foucauld to closely imitate Christ in the footsteps of the early Apostles.

The eighth chapter highlights the conclusion to all the topics dealt with. Foucauldian conversion consists of four conversions namely: pre-formative, formative, per-formative and post-formative. All these conversions are given in a gist. Besides, the intellectual, moral and religious conversion are summarized. Then, the spirituality of Foucauld as Incarnational, Eucharistic, Nazareth, Scriptural, Being for the Least, Lost, and Last, Conversional, Missionary, Fraternal, Discerning, a Vision and a Pilgrimage are explained. Thus, this book presents a challenging, inspiring life of Charles De Foucauld who imitated Christ so closely and intimately.

**Br. Pradeep Anthony L OFM**



**Visit to Pastoral Orientation Centre, Kochi**



**Sr Inigo's Visit to Van Thuan Home**



**Kolbe Children Visiting Fr Francis' Family**



**Kolbe Children Visiting Fr Sebastian in Kerala**



**Visit to Marine World, Chavakkad**



**National Office Team Visiting Open Air Prison, Devanahalli**



**Kolbe Kids on Excursion**





**PMI Volunteers Visiting Bijnor District Prison**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting Ernakulam Prison**



**Tihar Prisoners Present a Painting to Archbishop of Delhi**



**Ugadi Celebration at Mysore Central Prison**



**PMI Volunteers Celebrating Easter at Special Jail Rourkela**



**PMI Volunteers Conducting Medical Camp at Sagar Prison**



**PMI Volunteers Donating Moral Education Books to District Jail, Jashpur, Chhattisgarh**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting Aluva Prison**



**PMI Volunteers' Easter Celebration, Tihar Prison**



**Echo: Center for Juvenile Justice**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting Vaithiri Prison**



**Farewell to Fr Shaji Stephen, PMI Southern Regional Coordinator and Sr Jitha**



**The Staff and Students at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, who Launched Prison Ministry**